2006
Metro Residents Survey

An examination of Twin Cities area residents' concerns and attitudes about the region

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Metropolitan Council
390 Robert Street North, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101

The mission of the Metropolitan Council is to develop, in cooperation with local communities, a comprehensive regional planning framework, focusing on transportation, wastewater, parks and aviation systems, that guide the efficient growth of the metropolitan area. The Council operates transit and wastewater services and administers housing and other grant programs.

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Quality of Life

- Positive feeling about the Twin Cities region has been consistent over 24 years of Metropolitan Council surveys. In 2006, 97 percent of Twin Cities residents feel that the region is a better or "much better" place to live than other metropolitan areas.

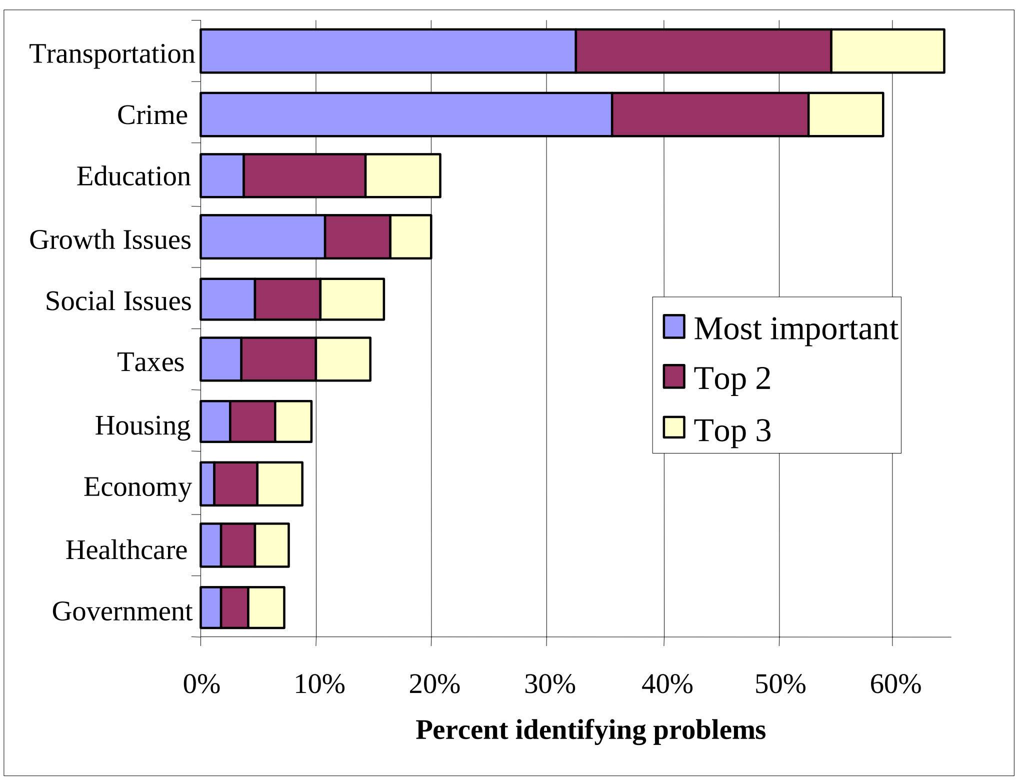
- There is emerging concern that the region's quality of life is slipping: 32 percent feel that the quality of life has gotten worse in the past year.

- When asked about the Twin Cities' "most attractive feature," 34 percent of survey participants identified the area's parks, trails, lakes and natural environment. Other assets cited are: arts and cultural opportunities (10 percent), the "variety of things to do" (8 percent), good neighborhoods (6 percent), and shopping (5 percent).

Issues Facing the Region

- Asked about issues facing the region, 33 percent named traffic congestion or other transportation challenges as the region's "single most important problem." Asked to consider additional problems, transportation concerns were mentioned by 64 percent.

Overall concern by respondent ranking, 2006



2006 n = 1,375

- Concern about crime is on the rise, with 36 percent citing crime as the “single most important problem” in 2006. A rising proportion of residents also place crime among the region’s top three problems (59 percent in 2006). However, crime remains well below the peak level of concern; from 1993 to 1996, a majority of metro residents identified crime as the single most important problem.

- Growth issues, education and social issues were the next most prevalent areas of concern for 2006 survey participants. These were more likely to be considered “other important problems” – secondary concerns rather than the “single most important problem.”

- These findings about the region’s key challenges are based on open-ended questions where residents could identify whatever they felt to be important. When asked specifically about the region’s pace of growth, a strong minority (47 percent) respond that growth is too rapid. Rural residents as a group were most likely to hold this view.

- A growing number are concerned about growth in their own community – 38 percent in 2006, compared to 26 percent at the start of the decade. About half of developing suburbs residents (52 percent) and rural residents (47 percent) feel that local growth is advancing too fast.

- A majority of residents (61 percent) believe that greater racial and ethnic diversity in the Twin Cities is beneficial. But there is significant concern about assimilation of the newcomers, tension among communities and the impacts on public resources.

Meeting Transportation Needs

- When asked how commute times in 2006 compare with commute times in 2005, more people thought times had increased than decreased. Still, analysis is inconclusive on whether commute times have actually worsened or improved. Three-quarters of commuters surveyed reported work trips of 30 minutes or less; this has not changed significantly over recent years.

- Half of those surveyed said they were very likely to try at least one traffic-reducing commute option, including transit, carpooling, home-based work, biking/walking or working closer to home. Transit (either bus or LRT) attracted the highest response: 26 percent said they were “very likely” to try transit, and 41 percent at least moderately likely.

- When asked about the importance of various transportation programs, multiple solutions were favored by the majority: optimizing the capacity and safety of existing roads was considered very important by 60 percent; commuter/light rail transit, 55 percent; adding extra lanes to freeways, 46 percent.

Residential Preference

- Twenty-seven percent of residents say they would prefer to live in a different type of area within the region. Residents of growing suburbs were most likely to indicate an interest in moving to another type of area (35 percent) and residents of small towns and rural areas least likely.

- Similarly, rural settings and small towns are most attractive to those wanting a change of lifestyle. For people preferring a rural setting, nature, open space and fewer people are appealing aspects. A slower pace and "small town feel" are often mentioned by those interested in relocating to a small town.

- At the same time, preference for older suburbs and central city neighborhoods was up compared to the 2004 and 2005 surveys. Having more things to do, being closer to urban amenities and a pedestrian-friendly environment are mentioned by many people interested in a more urban environment.

- Hypothetically, if present-day Twin Cities residents could be redistributed to their respective preferred settings, the result would be a large exodus from the suburbs, a smaller shift out of the central cities, and a doubling of the region's rural population.

The Role of the Metropolitan Council

- Positive public opinion about the Metropolitan Council remains steady, and greatly improved from the turn of the decade. In 2006, 73 percent of respondents said they have heard about the Metropolitan Council. Forty-two percent of those think the Council is doing a good or very good job, the highest rating since this question was first asked in 1997.

- A significant number of residents have a neutral opinion of the Council or no opinion. However, when Council programs and responsibilities are specifically listed, most are considered "very important" to majorities of Twin Cities residents. The highest importance rankings were given to water quality monitoring, wastewater treatment, and overall planning efforts to accommodate growth.

- More than three-quarters of residents surveyed have visited a regional park in the last 12 months. Forty-four percent of residents said that it is very important to purchase land now for future regional parks or open space.

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

Each year, the Metropolitan Council conducts the Metro Residents Survey. Its purpose is to measure and understand what the region's residents think about quality of life, leading regional issues, problems and solutions, and the Council's portfolio of program responsibilities. The survey provides public opinion that the Council can use to make the case for regional solutions.

This report describes the findings of the 2006 Metro Residents Survey. The survey is an annual effort dating back to 1982. Many of the questions asked in the 2006 study have been asked in past years and historical comparisons are provided.

Metro area residents were randomly selected for inclusion in the survey's geographically stratified sample. The Metropolitan Council mailed survey questionnaires to participants and collected responses from October 9 to November 29, 2006. A complete discussion of the survey methodology is found in Section 7 of this report. The survey instrument is found in the Appendix.

Reading data in this report

The report is organized by topic. Each section begins with a summary of significant findings, followed by a discussion of sub-topics within that section. Data tables are referenced in the discussion and are found after the discussion.

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers, with the result that some tables may not add up to 100 percent. Not all respondents answered every question. The actual number of respondents answering any given question is listed directly below the data table and is noted as "n =…"

Most results are reported through descriptive statistics such as frequencies of responses and cross-tabulations. Further analysis of the study data is available by contacting Todd Graham or Regan Carlson (651-602-1000) at the Metropolitan Council.

Section 2: Quality of Life

Key Findings

- Positive feelings about the Twin Cities region have been consistent over 24 years of Council surveys: 97 percent of residents say the region is a better place to live than other metropolitan areas.
- More volatile is the perception of change: 32 percent of residents think that the quality of life in the Twin Cities area diminished in 2006; 17 percent think it improved.
- The Twin Cities region has many attractive features and amenities. A variety of these were mentioned by survey participants; 34 percent highlighted the area's parks, trails, lakes and natural environment.
- Residents in the Twin Cities region remain divided on the issue of growth. A consistent minority – 43 percent in 2006 – thinks the Twin Cities region is growing too fast.
- A growing number – 36 percent in 2006 – see too much growth in their own communities. The concern is concentrated in developing suburbs and rural areas, where residents now complain about higher density, or "crowding."
- Residents identified crime and transportation as the region's most important problems: 36 percent see crime, gangs or related concerns as the region's single most important problem.
- Transportation, seen as the most important problem from 2000 to 2005, was identified by 33 percent as the region's greatest challenge in 2006. It's possible that traffic congestion has leveled off; it's also possible that some people are becoming accustomed to traffic congestion.
- While public concern about crime has been on the rise in recent years, concern has been higher in the past. From 1993 to 1996, crime concerns dominated survey results, with majorities of survey participants (more than 50 percent) naming crime as the region's most important problem.
- Growth, social issues, education, taxes, housing, and other issues were most important to small shares of the region's residents. Many survey participants consider these to be "other important problems" – second- or third-choice concerns rather than the "single most important problem."
- Sixty-one percent of residents agree that the trend of growing diversity benefits the region; 28 percent disagree; the balance are not sure. There is significant concern about assimilation of the newcomers, tension among communities, and impacts on public resources.

Discussion

Survey participants were asked how the Twin Cities compares to other metropolitan areas, what makes the region attractive, what problems are currently facing the region, and how those problems should be addressed.

The Twin Cities compared to other metro areas

Positive feelings about the Twin Cities region have been consistent over 24 years of Council surveys. The vast majority of Twin Cities residents (97 percent) consider this region a better place to live than other metropolitan areas. Over half of this number (56 percent) thinks that it is a “much better” place to live (Figure 1 and Table 2.01).

Changes in the quality of life

More volatile is the perception of change. Is the quality of life holding steady or diminishing? Half of residents (51 percent) think that the Twin Cities’ quality of life stayed the same in 2006; 17 percent think that it improved; 32 percent think that it worsened (Table 2.02). The share of discouraged residents has been edging upward.

What makes the Twin Cities area an attractive place to live?

Survey participants were asked to indicate what they think is the most attractive feature of the Twin Cities metro area today. The question was open-ended – that is, participants did not have a list of amenities or assets to choose from. Responses were coded into summary categories and the results are presented in Table 2.03.

Twenty-one percent of residents think that parks and trails are the region’s most attractive feature. Lakes and natural environment are identified by 13 percent). Also highly rated were: arts and culture (10 percent); a variety of things to do (8 percent); good neighborhoods and clean, safe or family-friendly neighborhoods (6 percent); shopping opportunities (5 percent); and the economy (5 percent). The distribution of responses in 2006 was very similar to the distribution found by the 2005 survey (Table 2.03).

Perceptions regarding growth in the region and local communities

Half of the region’s residents (53 percent) think the Twin Cities area, as a whole, is growing at about the right pace. Others are less satisfied: 43 percent think that the Twin Cities area is growing too fast. Response to this question has been consistent in recent years (Table 2.04).

Participants were also asked about growth in their own communities: 57 percent think local growth is happening at about the right pace; 36 percent think local growth is advancing too fast. Concern over local growth has grown: Only 26 percent of residents said their areas were growing too quickly six years ago.

Geographic variations of public opinion

To better understand local views, responses can be segmented by where respondents live. The Council’s *2030 Regional Development Framework* identifies six planning areas: Developed Communities, Developing Communities, Rural Centers, Rural Residential Areas, Diversified Rural Areas, and Agricultural Areas. The size of the 2006 Metro

Residents Survey sample makes geographic segmentation of the results valid for Developed Suburbs, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Developing Communities, and the remaining Rural Areas combined.

Table 2.05 looks at growth opinions for each area. Statistically, there are minimal differences in perceptions about regional growth: About half think the region is growing at about the right pace; a significant minority thinks the region is growing too fast. Rural residents are most likely to have a critical view.

There are significant differences about perceived growth at the local level. Only 23 percent of Minneapolis/St. Paul residents think that their communities are growing too fast, and 28 percent of residents of Developed Suburbs. In Developing Suburbs and Rural Areas, about half of residents feel that local growth is too fast.

Top issue facing the Twin Cities metro area

Residents were asked to identify the “single most important problem facing the Twin Cities metro area today.” They were then asked to suggest a solution to that problem. Residents were also asked to list up to three “other important problems” facing the region. Each of these questions was open-ended, with survey respondents describing issues and solutions in their own words. For analysis, the open-ended responses were categorized by primary category and detailed sub-category. (See Table 2.06 for categories and sub-categories used to code responses.) The top three problems from each survey participant were used in the analysis.

At the major category level, crime – which includes crime in general, gangs, drug-related crime, and related issues – was identified as the top problem by 36 percent of survey participants. Transportation issues were cited almost as often, with 33 percent identifying traffic, congestion, commuting, transportation in general, mass transit, road construction and related issues.

Table 2.07 and Figure 2 provide a time-series perspective of the “single most important problem” of the past 20 years’ surveys. Throughout the 1990s, public opinion held that crime was the region’s greatest concern. From 1993 to 1996, majorities of survey participants (more than 50 percent) named crime as the region’s most important problem. From 2000 to 2005, transportation was the predominant concern, with peak concern (58 percent) in 2003.

Table 2.08 shows opinions on the most important issues by planning area. In the Developed Suburbs, Developing Communities, and Rural Areas, transportation and crime share the top spot for top problem. Central Cities residents were less likely to identify traffic congestion and other transportation problems – and more likely to identify a particular social problem. Discrimination or segregation was the #1 issue for 7 percent of central cities residents (versus 0 percent in other areas).

Top three issues facing the Twin Cities metro area

The Metropolitan Council asks survey participants about the “single most important problem,” but also about “other important problems” facing the Twin Cities. Identifying the top three problems allows a broader mining of overall concern – the share of all residents who have an issue on their minds.

Traffic congestion and other transportation problems are still the leading concerns when the top three problems are considered cumulatively. But there has been a drop in the share of residents concerned about transportation – from 87 percent in 2003 to 64 percent in 2006 (Figure 3, Table 2.09 and Figure 4). It’s possible that traffic congestion has leveled off in recent years; it’s also possible that some people are becoming accustomed to traffic congestion. This does not negate transportation as an issue though: 64 percent concern is still a solid majority.

Crime has become a majority concern (59 percent are concerned) for the first time since 1992-98.

Education is a concern for one in five residents, although most of these listed education as a second- or third-choice concern. Social concerns, growth, housing, the economy and taxes also tended to be second- or third-choice concerns rather than the “single most important problem.”

Table 2.10 shows overall concern for regional problems, by planning area. Transportation and crime are the two most often mentioned problems throughout the region.

Figure 5 and Table 2.11 show time series for traffic congestion as one of the top three problems facing the region. Traffic congestion started to emerge in public consciousness in the 1990s. Concern about the issue doubled between 2000 and 2003, before beginning to ebb in 2004. In recent years, mass transit and the sufficiency of the transit system are gaining prominence as transportation problems highlighted by survey participants.

Solutions to problems facing the Twin Cities area

Residents were asked to suggest potential solutions to the problems that they identified as the “single most important problem.” Solutions related to transportation issues are listed in Table 2.12 and solutions for crime and growth are listed in Table 2.13.

Education and growth issues also surfaced fairly frequently, throughout the developed and developing communities. Growth issues were of significantly greater concerns in rural areas.

Among Twin Cities residents most concerned about transportation issues, most suggest improving or increasing mass transit (50 percent), or improving or increasing roads (31 percent). Among residents who suggested mass transit solutions, their solutions can be split into two sub-groups, with 22 percent recommending mass transit generally, and another 29 percent indicating LRT or commuter trains specifically. Among residents who suggested improving/increasing the road infrastructure, their solutions can be split into three sub-groups: 13 percent suggest adding more lanes to existing freeways; 9 percent suggest building more roads; and 9 percent suggest widening roads, improving road design and generally improving roads.

To resolve transportation issues, residents consistently suggest system solutions rather than changing their own routines. However, many respondents also expressed an interest in trying transit or carpooling elsewhere in this survey (Section 3: Commuting Characteristics and Choices). Some of the suggestions for expanding/improving the transit system may arise from respondents' desire to use transit, if it were a viable option in their situation.

Among the 36 percent of survey participants who are most concerned about crime, the top solutions were: hire more police (43 percent); tougher sentences (12 percent); police involvement with the community (5 percent); deal with poverty and the cause of crime (4 percent); and cut welfare benefits to keep people away (4 percent).

To solve regional growth problems, respondents suggested: making urbanized areas more desirable (20 percent); reducing immigration (15 percent); and strengthening regional planning (10 percent).

Diversity in the region

Residents were asked if they agreed with the statement "a more diverse population benefits the region." The possible answers ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" or "not sure" (Table 2.14). In addition, an open-ended follow-up question asked residents to describe the effects of growing diversity (Figures 6 through 8).

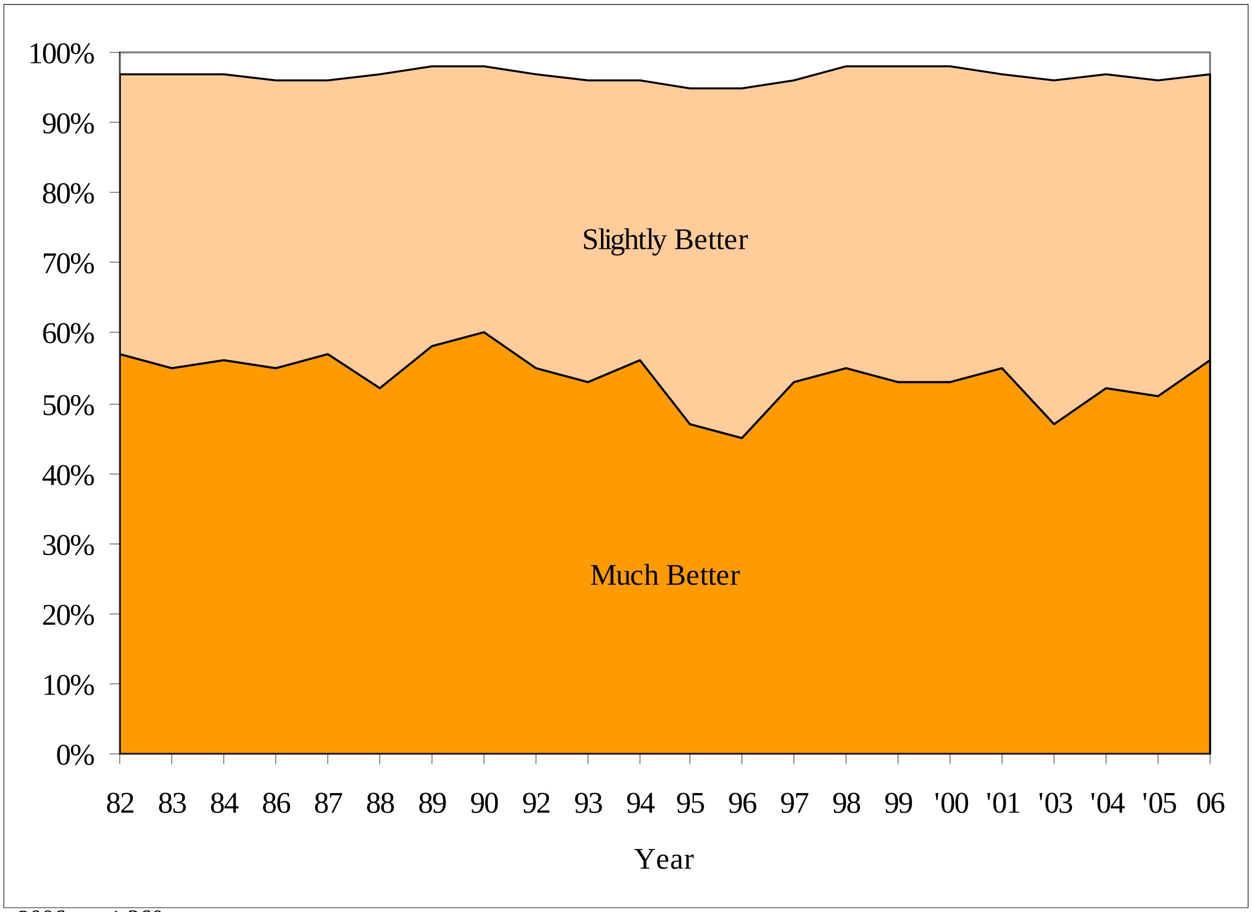
Sixty-one percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that a more diverse population benefits the region in some sense; 28 percent of residents disagree or strongly disagree. The balance, 11 percent, are "not sure." In Minneapolis and St. Paul, 72 percent of residents agree that a more diverse population is beneficial – versus 47 percent in Rural Areas.

A second, open-ended question – "How is the region affected by growing diversity?" – more clearly reveals the ambivalence of residents and the lack of a central consensus. Just over one-third (35 percent) give positive responses when asked how the region is affected by growing diversity. They responded that diversity enhances culture and the quality of life (33 percent) or that it is good for the economy (2 percent). Twenty-two percent of residents gave responses that are neutral or equivocal, such as "it depends on the individual."

Forty-three percent of the region's residents expressed concerns about: assimilation and tension among communities (19 percent), crime and safety (9 percent), strain on public fiscal resources (8 percent), strain on public schools (3 percent), negative impact on the labor market (2 percent) or other negative impacts (2 percent).

Answers to this second question are somewhat correlated with answers to the first, but not perfectly. There is a share of the population that agrees "a more diverse population benefits the region," but they indicated concerns or reservations in the follow-up question (Figure 7).

Figure 1: How would you rate the Twin Cities as a place to live compared to other metropolitan areas in the nation?



2006 n = 1,360

Table 2.01: How would you rate the Twin Cities as a place to live compared to other metropolitan areas in the nation?

	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006
A much better place to live	47%	55%	47%	52%	48%	56%
A slightly better place to live	50%	42%	49%	45%	48%	41%
A slightly worse place to live	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%
A much worse place to live	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%

Table 2.02: Over the past year, do you think the quality of life in the Twin Cities has gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?

	1999	2000/ 2001	2003	2004	2005	2006
Gotten better	26%	Not asked	15%	12%	14%	17%
Stayed the same	60%		57%	64%	55%	51%
Gotten worse	13%		28%	24%	31%	32%

2005 n = 1,407

Table 2.03: What do you think is the single most attractive feature of the Twin Cities metro area today?

Most attractive feature:	Share of people indicating that feature as the most attractive:	
	2005	2006
Parks and trails	23%	21%
Natural environment	14%	13%
Arts & culture	8%	10%
Variety of things to do	7%	8%
Good neighborhoods, clean, safe, or family-friendly	8%	6%
Mall of America, shopping	7%	5%
Good economy	4%	5%
Beautiful cities or downtowns	5%	4%
People	4%	4%
Quality of life—good balance	1%	4%
Professional sports	2%	2%
Negative response given	1%	<1%
Other responses	16%	17%

2006 n = 1,293

Table 2.04: Do you think the Twin Cities metro area as a whole is growing too fast, at about the right pace, or too slow? How about the city, suburb, or town where you live?

	Twin Cities area as a whole		Community where respondent lives	
	2000	**2006**	**2000**	**2006**
Too fast	47%	43%	26%	36%
About the right pace	52%	53%	71%	57%
Too slow	1%	4%	3%	7%

2006 n = 1,346 (Twin Cities), n = 1,351 (community)

Table 2.05: Opinions of growth by planning area, 2006

	Twin Cities area as a whole is growing:			Community where respondent lives is growing:		
Respondents living in the following planning area:	**Too fast**	**About right pace**	**Too slow**	**Too fast**	**About right pace**	**Too slow**
Minneapolis/St. Paul Only	42%	51%	7%	23%	62%	16%
Developed Suburbs	44%	52%	4%	28%	68%	4%
Developing Communities	42%	55%	3%	52%	44%	4%
Rural Areas	51%	47%	2%	47%	45%	8%
Twin Cities Region	43%	53%	4%	36%	57%	7%

2006 n = 1,346 for first question and 1,351 for second

Table 2.06: What do you think is the single most important problem facing the Twin Cities metro area today?

Single most important problem	Percent	Single most important problem	Percent
Crime – Total	**35.6%**	**Taxes – Total**	**3.5%**
Crime (general)	29.9%	Taxes (general)	2.1%
Gangs	2.8%	Property taxes	1.5%
Drug related crime	1.3%		
Guns	0.6%	**Housing – Total**	**2.4%**
Crimes by youth	0.5%	Housing cost	1.6%
Criminal justice system	0.4%	Housing (general)	0.7%
		Housing availability	0.1%
Transportation – Total	**32.7%**		
Traffic, congestion, commuting	18.5%	**Government – Total**	**1.9%**
Transportation (general)	8.5%	Government (general)	1.1%
Mass transit	5.0%	Government funding	0.5%
Road construction	0.6%	Governor	0.2%
Drunk driving	0.1%	Stadium issues	0.1%
Parking costs and availability	0.1%		
		Health Care – Total	**1.8%**
Growth – Total	**10.6%**	Health care cost	1.4%
Sprawl and outward growth	4.0%	Health care (general)	0.2%
Immigration	2.6%	Health care availability	0.2%
Population, crowding, density	2.4%		
Urban decay	1.7%	**Economy – Total**	**1.2%**
		Job market issues	0.7%
Social Issues – Total	**4.7%**	High cost of living	0.3%
Discrimination or segregation	1.8%	Growing wealth & income disparity	0.2%
Poverty	0.9%		
Drug use	0.4%	**Environment – Total**	**0.8%**
Minorities	0.3%	Environment (general)	0.4%
Morality	0.3%	Water quality	0.2%
Politeness, neighborly behavior	0.2%	Pollution (general)	0.1%
Homeless	0.2%	Air pollution	0.1%
Welfare	0.2%		
Youth problems	0.2%	**Energy – Total**	**0.5%**
Ideological polarization	0.1%	Energy prices, conservation	0.5%
Education – Total	**3.7%**	**Other**	**0.6%**
Education (general)	1.3%		
Availability	0.9%	**Total**	**100.0%**
Financing	0.8%		
Quality	0.6%		

2006 n = 1,362

Table 2.07: Single most important problem in the Twin Cities metro area, 1986 to 2006, grouped into major categories

Year	Crime	Transportation	Growth	Social	Taxes	Housing	Economy	Other*
1986	17%	5%	n/a	9%	18%	2%	21%	28%
1987	12%	8%	n/a	14%	15%	4%	23%	24%
1988	21%	11%	n/a	21%	13%	5%	12%	17%
1989	22%	8%	n/a	30%	12%	5%	8%	15%
1990	26%	7%	n/a	23%	11%	3%	11%	19%
1992	41%	4%	n/a	14%	4%	0%	26%	11%
1993	61%	3%	n/a	11%	3%	0%	11%	11%
1994	55%	4%	n/a	12%	8%	2%	7%	12%
1995	58%	4%	1%	14%	5%	1%	9%	8%
1996	53%	8%	3%	12%	7%	2%	9%	6%
1997	39%	12%	3%	15%	6%	1%	6%	18%
1998	31%	16%	4%	13%	10%	5%	6%	16%
1999	24%	20%	4%	16%	7%	10%	4%	15%
2000	13%	23%	3%	14%	7%	16%	6%	18%
2001	9%	19%	2%	12%	6%	19%	14%	18%
2003	13%	58%	6%	5%	3%	4%	3%	9%
2004	17%	49%	12%	6%	2%	4%	2%	8%
2005	26%	35%	11%	9%	3%	4%	3%	9%
2006	36%	33%	11%	5%	4%	2%	1%	9%

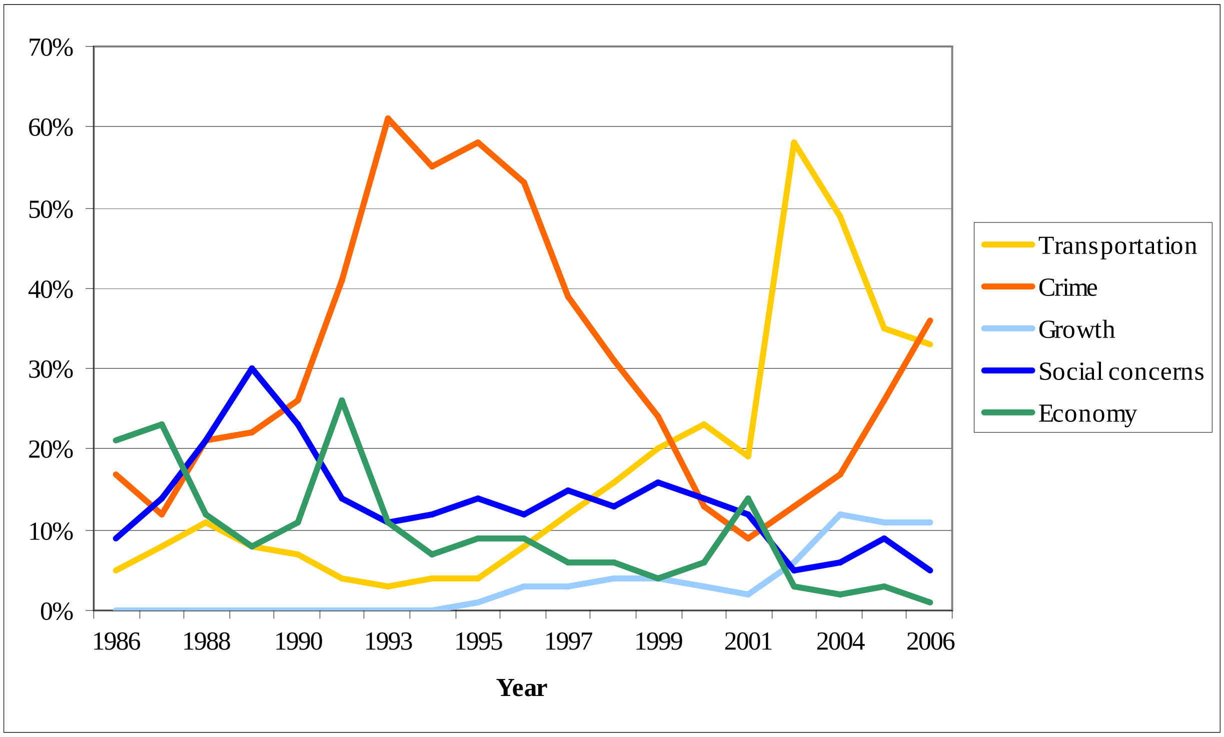
*Other problems include: education, government, environment, weather, health care and energy

Table 2.08: Single most important problem in the Twin Cities metro area by planning area

Minneapolis/ St. Paul Only	Percent	Developed Suburbs	Percent	Developing Communities	Percent	Rural Areas	Percent
Crime	34%	Transportation	36%	Crime	37%	Crime	33%
Transportation	21%	**includes Traffic*	*20%*	Transportation	37%	Transportation	32%
**includes Traffic*	*8%*	Crime	35%	**includes Traffic*	*24%*	**includes Traffic*	*17%*
Social issues	12%	Growth issues	10%	Growth issues	11%	Growth issues	15%
Growth issues	11%	Education	4%	Social issues	4%	Economy	5%
Education	6%	Healthcare	4%	Taxes	3%	Social issues	4%
Taxes	4%	Housing	4%	Education	3%	Taxes	3%
Housing	3%	Taxes	3%	Economy	1%	Education	2%
Government	3%	Government	3%	Energy	1%	Government	2%
Environment	2%	Social issues	1%	Healthcare	1%	Housing	1%
Economy	2%	Environment	<1%	Housing	1%	Energy	<1%
Other	1%	Economy	<1%	Government	1%	Environment	<1%
Healthcare	<1%	Energy	<1%	Environment	<1%	Healthcare	<1%
Energy	<1%	Other	<1%	Other	<1%	Other	<1%

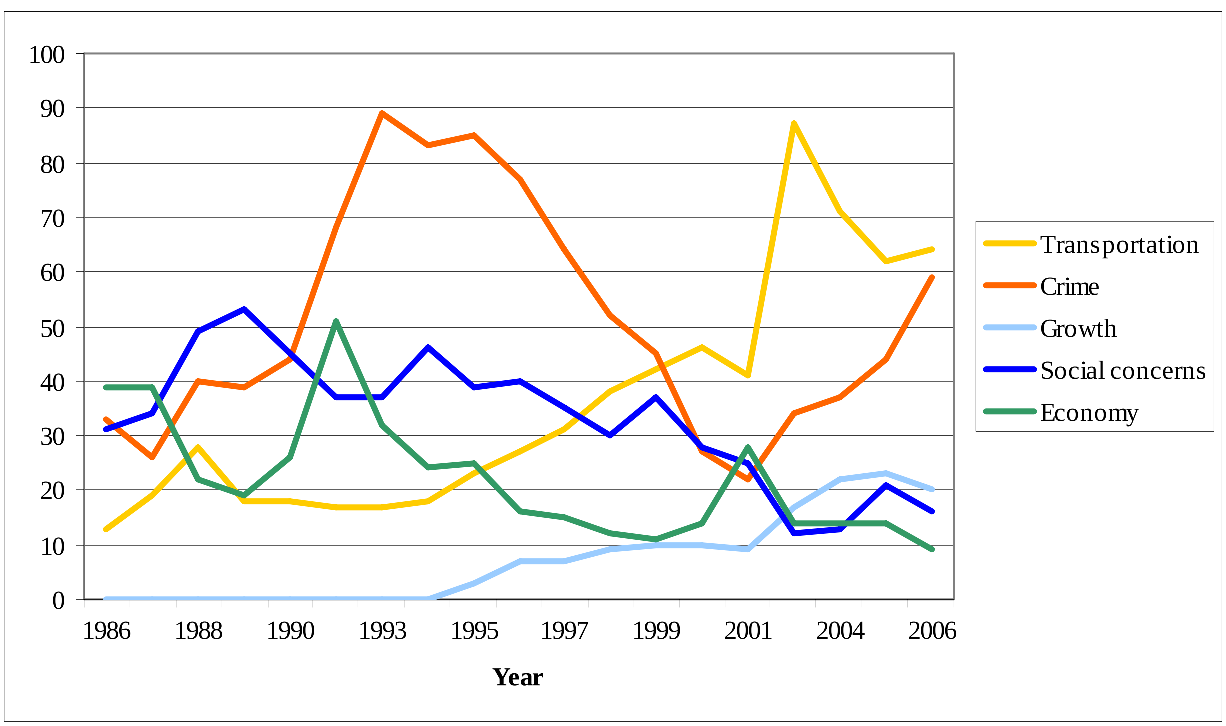
n= 349 in Minneapolis/St. Paul, n=369 in Developed Suburbs, n=348 in Developing Communities, n=309 in Rural Areas

Figure 2: Single most important problem, 1986 to 2006



2006 n = 1,375

Figure 3: Overall concern (top three problems identified), 1986 to 2006



2006 n = 1,375

Table 2.09: Overall concern (top three problems identified) for issues facing the Twin Cities, 1982 to 2006

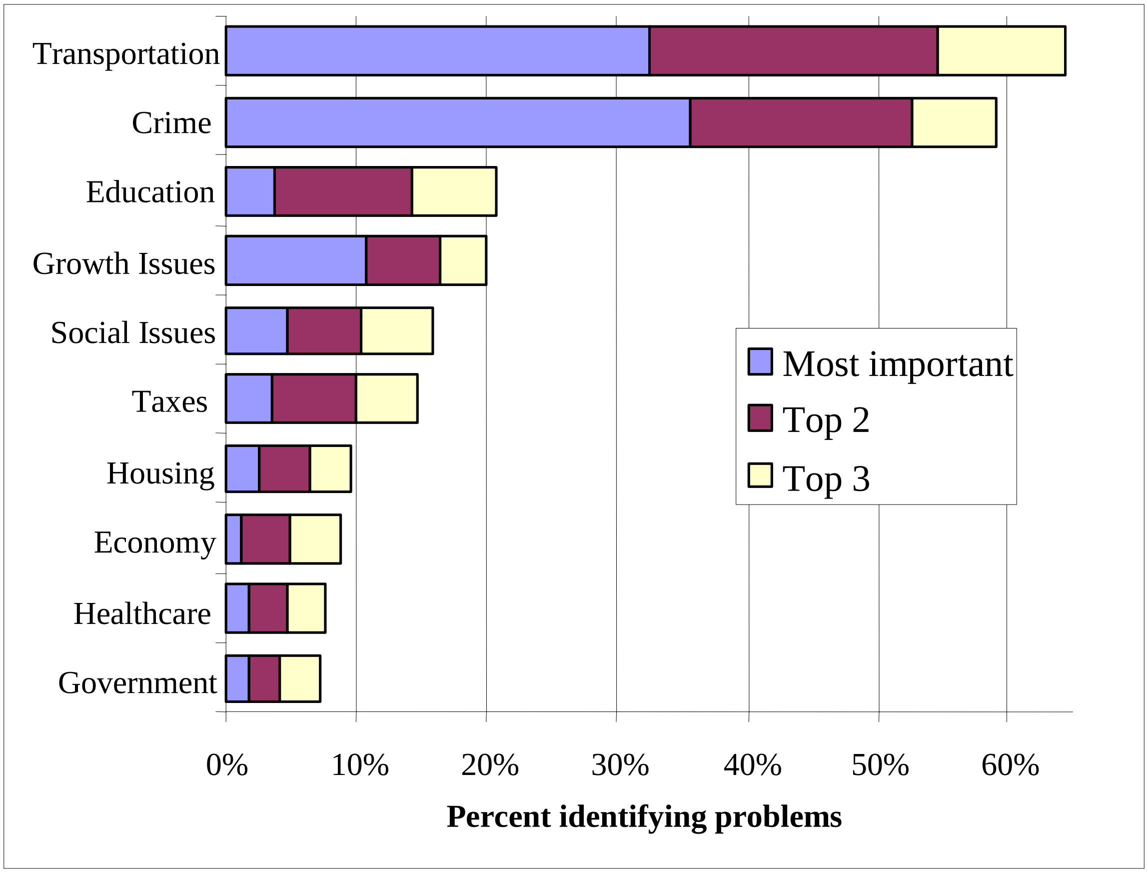
Year	Percent share indicating topic as one of their top three problems:													
	Transportation	Crime	Social issues	Growth	Housing	Jobs and unemployment	Economy - other	Taxes	Education	Environment	Government	Health	Energy	Other
1986	13	33	31	n/a	6	24	15	35	7	23	5	6	-	18
1987	19	26	34	n/a	11	19	20	28	10	15	3	14	-	-
1988	28	40	49	n/a	13	10	12	28	10	17	6	4	2	15
1989	18	39	53	n/a	10	9	10	29	9	23	4	3	1	6
1990	18	44	45	n/a	9	14	12	24	14	22	8	4	3	6
1992	17	68	37	n/a	5	39	12	16	14	9	5	9	-	11
1993	17	89	37	n/a	4	21	11	20	15	5	9	6	-	14
1994	18	83	46	n/a	9	15	9	31	18	6	5	9	-	14
1995	23	85	39	3	4	14	11	19	20	4	5	4	-	11
1996	27	77	40	7	6	7	9	27	17	4	6	2	-	12
1997	31	64	35	7	4	5	10	20	18	4	9	3	-	11
1998	38	52	30	9	10	5	7	24	17	7	4	5	-	11
1999	42	45	37	10	20	6	5	16	19	3	8	6	1	7
2000	46	27	28	10	32	5	9	19	19	5	7	7	6	7
2001	41	22	25	9	35	12	16	15	27	5	9	5	-	5
2003	87	34	12	17	18	10	4	16	21	10	10	4	1	3
2004	71	37	13	22	20	8	6	11	25	6	11	5	1	6
2005	62	44	21	23	17	6	8	14	13	7	11	4	4	4
2006	64	59	16	20	10	4	5	15	21	6	7	8	1	4

2006 n = 1,375

Notes:

- This is a different way of looking at problems. Survey respondents identified a most important problem, as well as “other problems.” For example, a person could indicate traffic congestion, crime and education funding as their top three problems, and their responses would be counted for each of the three categories.
- Respondents could list up to three problems, so the total will be greater than 100%.
- Urban growth/sprawl issues were not identified prior to 1995.
- In this table, economic issues are split into two groups: jobs-related and non-jobs-related.

Figure 4: Overall concern by respondent ranking, 2006



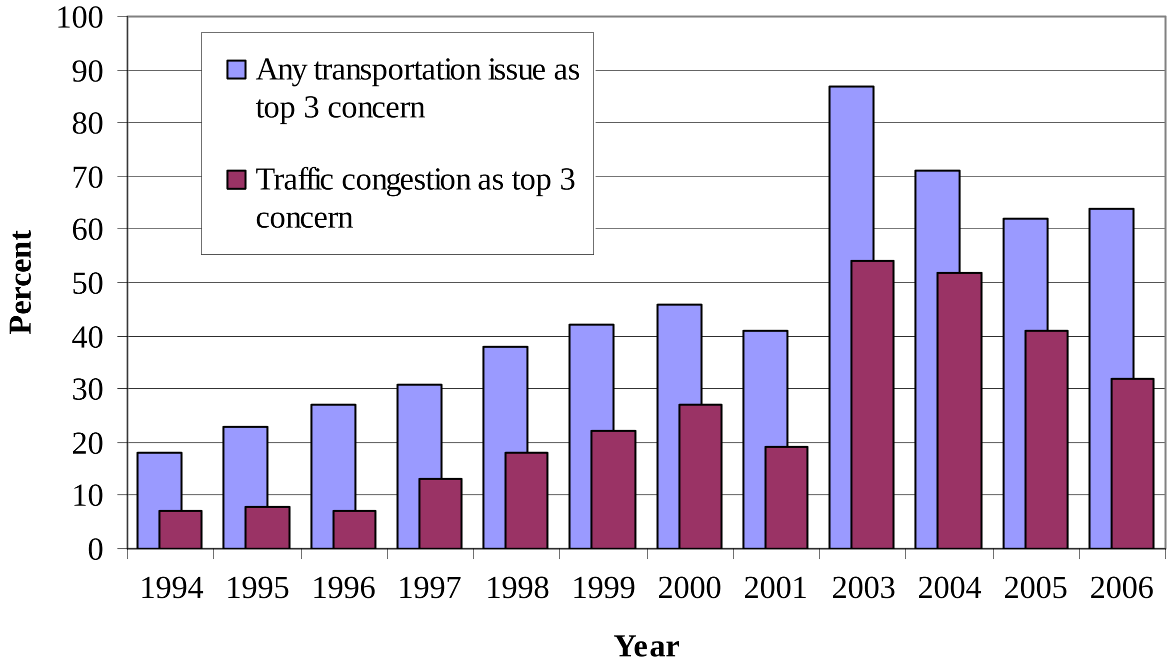
2006 n = 1,375

Table 2.10: Overall concern (top three problems identified) for each planning area: 2006

Minneapolis/ St. Paul Only	Percent	Developed Suburbs	Percent	Developing Communities	Percent	Rural Areas	Percent
Crime	56%	Transportation	67%	Transportation	68%	Transportation	65%
Transportation	54%	**includes Traffic*	*32%*	**includes Traffic*	*41%*	**includes Traffic*	*32%*
**includes Traffic*	*19%*	Crime	60%	Crime	60%	Crime	58%
Education	24%	Education	21%	Growth issues	21%	Growth issues	28%
Social issues	22%	Growth issues	17%	Education	20%	Social issues	15%
Growth issues	21%	Taxes	15%	Social issues	17%	Taxes	15%
Taxes	16%	Social issues	11%	Taxes	13%	Education	14%
Economy	13%	Housing	9%	Housing	9%	Economy	9%
Housing	12%	Economy	8%	Economy	7%	Housing	7%
Healthcare	9%	Healthcare	8%	Government	7%	Government	6%
Government	8%	Environment	7%	Healthcare	7%	Healthcare	4%
Other	7%	Government	6%	Environment	6%	Environment	4%
Environment	5%	Other	6%	Energy	2%	Other	3%
Energy	<1%	Energy	<1%	Other	1%	Energy	1%

n=349 in Minneapolis/St. Paul, n=369 in Developed Suburbs, n=348 in Developing Communities, n=309 in Rural Areas

Figure 5: Traffic congestion and transportation as concerns (top three problems identified), 1994 to 2006



2006 = 1,375

Table 2.11: Traffic congestion as concern (top three problems identified), 1994 to 2006

Year	Share of all respondents indicating traffic congestion as concern
1994	7%
1995	8%
1996	7%
1997	13%
1998	18%
1999	22%
2000	27%
2001	19%
2003	54%
2004	52%
2005	41%
2006	32%

2006 n = 1,375

Table 2.12: Solutions suggested by respondents for dealing with traffic congestion and transportation issues

Suggested solutions	Share who listed traffic congestion as most important problem	Share who listed any transportation issue as most important problem
Improve/increase road infrastructure	**41%**	**31%**
· More lanes on existing highways	21%	13%
· Build more roads	10%	9%
· Better road design	2%	3%
· Better roads in general	7%	5%
· Widen roads in general	1%	1%
Improve/increase mass transit	**42%**	**50%**
· Increase/improve mass transit	19%	22%
· More LRT and/or commuter trains	24%	29%
Modify behavior	**3%**	**2%**
· Increase commuter incentives/programs	1%	1%
· Reduce urban sprawl	1%	1%
Other suggestions	**25%**	**26%**
· Reduce road construction time	3%	2%
· Increase funding for transportation	7%	10%
· Better long-range planning	8%	7%
· Convert sane lanes	1%	1%
· Other miscellaneous suggestions	7%	6%

n for traffic congestion only = 222

n for all transportation issues combined = 413

· Total percent is greater than 100 due to some respondents giving multiple suggestions

· Traffic congestion is a subset of the larger transportation issue. In addition to the traffic congestion concerns, the larger transportation issue group includes those people who have concerns about the transportation system in general, mass transit, parking and other non-congestion-related transportation issues.

Table 2.13: Solutions suggested by respondents for dealing with crime and growth problems

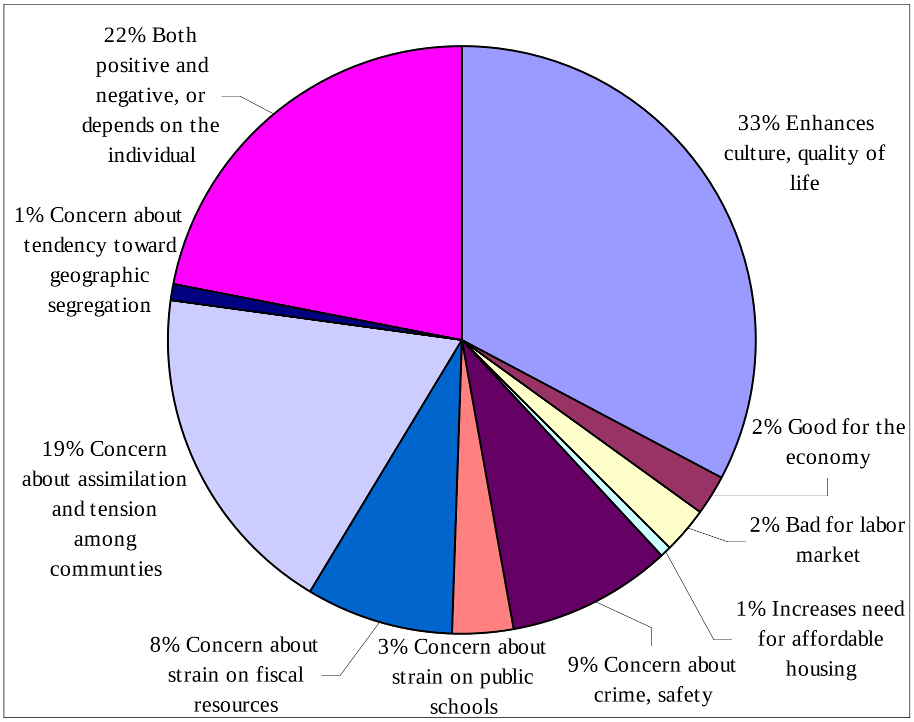
Suggested solutions	Share of responses
Crime (470 responses)	
· More police	43%
· Tougher sentences	12%
· Increase police involvement in community	5%
· Deal with poverty and the cause of crime	4%
· Cut welfare benefits to keep people away	4%
· Miscellaneous	32%
Growth (127 responses)	
· Make urbanized area more desirable	20%
· Reduce immigration (legal and illegal)	15%
· Need stronger regional planning	10%
· Discourage people from moving here	6%
· Discourage large families	6%
· Increase mass transit	4%
· Discourage moving to outlying areas	1%
· Miscellaneous	31%

Table 2.14: Do you agree that a more diverse population benefits the region?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
Minneapolis/St. Paul Only	8%	9%	32%	40%	12%
Developed Suburbs	11%	17%	38%	23%	13%
Developing Communities	13%	20%	43%	15%	9%
Rural Areas	11%	27%	36%	11%	14%
Twin Cities Region	11%	17%	38%	23%	11%

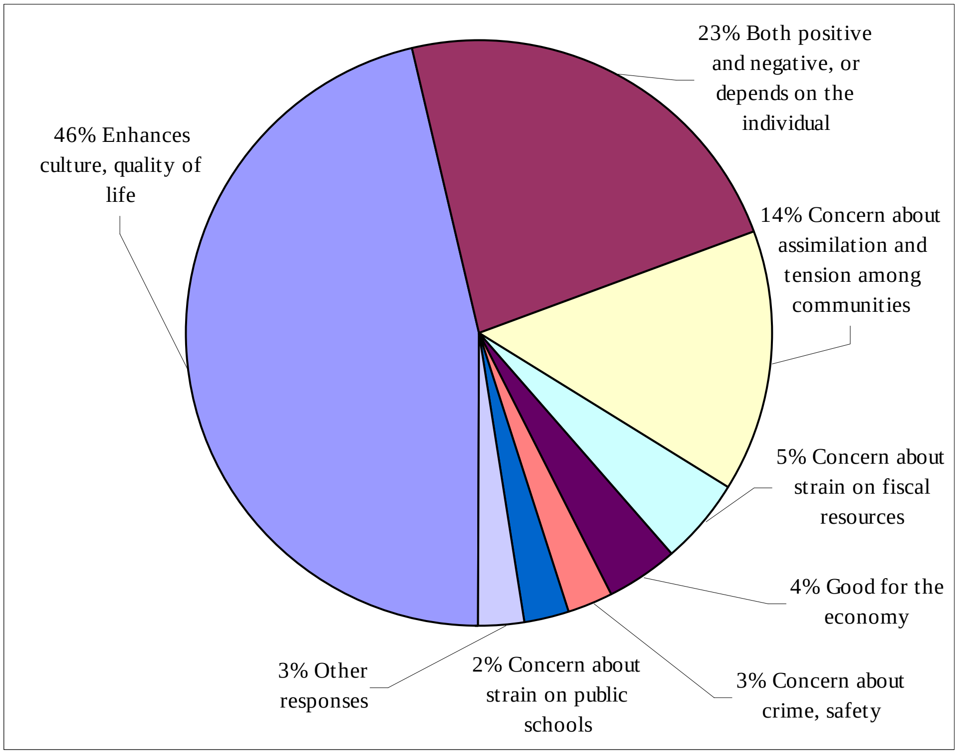
n = 1,386

Figure 6: In your opinion, how is the region affected by growing diversity?



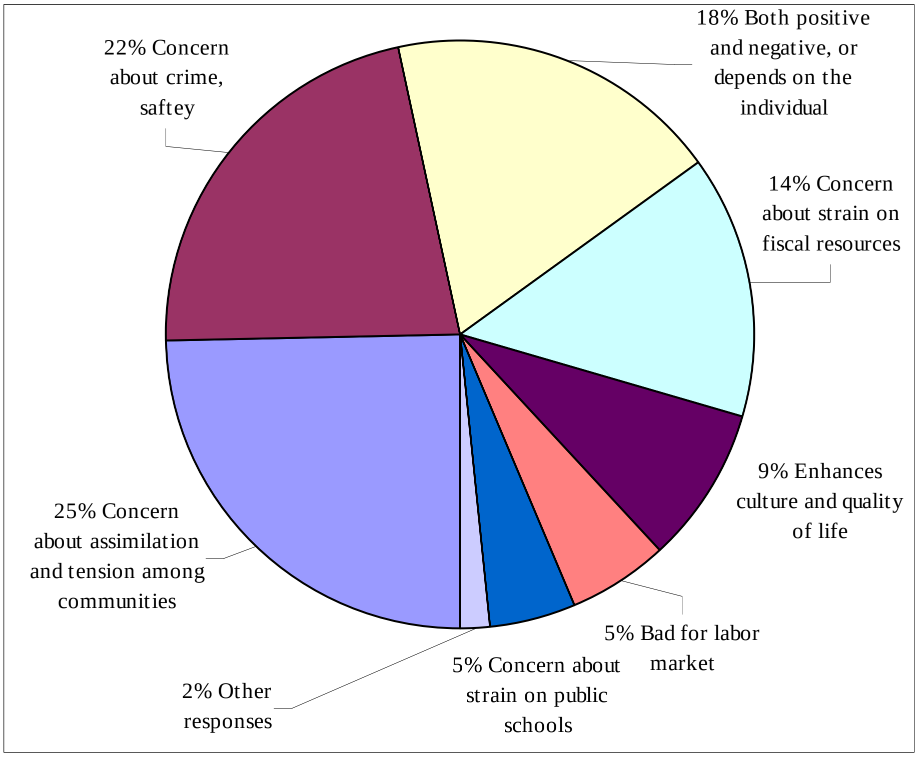
n = 1,023

Figure 7: Agrees that diversity is beneficial:
How is the region affected by growing diversity?



n = 591

Figure 8: Disagrees that diversity is beneficial: How is the region affected by growing diversity?



n = 354

Section 3: Commuting Characteristics and Choices

Key Findings

- When asked how commute times in 2006 compare with commute times in 2005, more people thought times had increased than decreased. Still, analysis is inconclusive on whether commute times have actually worsened or improved. Three-quarters of commuters surveyed reported work trips of 30 minutes or less; this has not changed significantly over recent years.

- Perceived commute times of 2006 survey participants averaged 24.1 minutes each way. Two years ago, the commute times of 2004 survey participants averaged 24.5 minutes – not a significant difference. Comparison with past years' surveys suggests that commute times have not significantly worsened (nor improved) since 2003.

- Survey participants were asked about the likelihood of trying cost-reducing commute solutions. "Fuel-efficient vehicles" is the most popular cost-reducing solution: 34 percent said they are very likely to try a more fuel-efficient vehicle.

- Forty-nine percent of respondents assessed themselves as very likely to try one (or more) of several traffic-reducing solutions. The largest number are "very likely" to try transit (26 percent); 22 percent are very likely to work at home or telecommute.

- A majority of residents think that the most important programs to resolve the transportation issues facing the region are optimizing the capacity and safety of existing roads and expanding commuter rail and light rail transit.

Discussion

Commuting modes and times

Of residents who work, 8 percent work at home; 76 percent get to work by driving alone; 16 percent use alternative means to get to work. When the margin of error is considered, the only statistically significant difference from previous surveys' results is a very slight drop in the share of workers who drive alone, from 80 percent in 2000 and 2003 to 76 percent in 2006.

The survey asked adult residents who work outside the home to estimate their typical commute time in 2006 and 2005. The reported data represent only perceived commute times, not more rigorous trip diary analysis. Perceived commute times vary from actual commute times due to tendencies to round off or otherwise overestimate. Some of the perceived commute time change may be due to a change in survey respondents' destinations. These factors were not isolated in the Council's Residents Survey analysis. Commute times reported by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Metropolitan Council's Travel Behavior Inventory models provide more reliable estimates of travel times.

Among residents who were working at a place other than home, the perceived commute time in 2006 averaged 24.1 minutes – an insignificant change compared to the 24.5 minutes average in 2004.

Asked whether their commute time had changed in the past year, 27 percent felt their time on the road had increased; 12 percent indicated reduced commute time (Figure 10). However, there is an observed tendency to remember past commute times as shorter than they actually were.

Comparison with past years' surveys suggests that commute times have not significantly worsened (nor improved) since 2003, when the question was first asked.

For further comparison, the U.S. Census Bureau has published average commute times for 1980, 1990 and 2000. According to the Census, the average commute time in the Twin Cities has risen from 19.8 minutes in 1980, to 20.8 minutes in 1990, and 23.0 minutes in 2000 (Table 3.02).

Table 3.03 and Figure 11 compare responses from 2006 with those from 2004 and 2005 Metro Residents Surveys. The measurement of very short commutes (10 minutes or less) has varied from year to year. This is likely due to a change in survey administration, not an actual shift in commuting behavior.

Cost-reducing and traffic-reducing commute solutions

During the summer of 2006, prior to the Council's survey, gasoline prices rose to over $3 per gallon. Without referencing fuel prices, the survey asked participants to assess their interest in various cost-reducing commute solutions. The highest ranked choice was to commute in a more fuel-efficient vehicle, with 34 percent saying they were very likely to try fuel-efficient vehicles.

The second and third most common solutions were to try transit (either buses or light rail) or work at home, with 26 percent and 22 percent evaluating these as very likely (Table 3.04). Individually, these traffic-reducing solutions do not appear popular. However, as a group, traffic-reducing solutions do have an appeal: 49 percent of respondents assessed themselves as very likely to try one (or more) of the traffic-reducing solutions listed. (Note: Fuel-efficient vehicles are considered separate from the five traffic-reducing solutions.)

Table 3.05 shows variations in responses by geography. Respondents in rural areas said they are most likely to drive a more fuel-efficient vehicle (39 percent). A higher percent of residents of Minneapolis and St. Paul are "very likely" to try a traffic-reducing solution (71 percent versus 51 percent in developing communities) than those in the rest of the Twin Cities area. The two categories with the biggest differences between the central cities and suburban/rural areas are "take transit" and "bike or walk to work". These options are not feasible for many people with long or suburb-to-suburb commutes.

Importance of transportation programs to meet long-range needs

Residents were asked to rate the importance of eight different components of the transportation system in meeting the area's long-range transportation needs (Table 3.06 and Figure 12). Residents rated each component using a four-point scale, with 1 being "not at all important" and 4 being "very important."

A majority indicated that two components are very important to meeting the long-range transportation needs of the region: optimizing the capacity and safety of existing roads was considered very important by 60 percent and expanding commuter rail and light rail transit was very important to 55 percent.

Other system components evaluated and found to be of high importance include: adding extra lanes to freeways (46 percent, “very important”); expanding the Metro Transit bus system (39 percent); expanding the park-and-ride/express bus program (39 percent). Expanding the EZ-Pass toll system averaged only “slightly important”.

Table 3.01: How do you normally get to work?

Mode of travel	2000	2003	2005	2006
Drive alone	80%	80%	78%	76%
Take the bus	6%	6%	8%	6%
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	7%	6%	6%	7%
Bicycle	<1%	1%	2%	<1%
Walk	1%	1%	<1%	2%
Take the LRT	Not asked	Not asked	1%	<1%
Some other way	6%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Work at home	Not asked	6%	7%	8%

2006 n = 1,012 working respondents

Note: In the 2005 survey, working respondents *who did not work at home* were allowed to indicate multiple responses. For this reason, responses sum to 103 percent.

Table 3.02: Average perceived commute time now and one year ago (workers who do not work at home)

Mode of travel	Census Average Time to Work (in minutes) 1980	1990	2000	2006 Residents Survey Average (in minutes) 2006	One Year Ago
All workers who did not work at home	19.8	20.8	23.0	24.1	22.8
Workers who drive alone	18.4	20.1	22.3	23.2	22.3

2006 n = 906

Note: The Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) is produced by the U.S. Census Bureau and is presented here for historical comparison.

Table 3.03: Perceived commute time now and one year ago (workers who do not work at home)

Time category in minutes	2004 Survey: Commute Time in 2004	2005 Survey: Commute Time in 2005	2006 Survey: Commute Time in 2006	2006 Survey: Perception of Commute Time 1 Year Ago
5 minutes or less	5%	5%	8%	8%
6 to 10	14%	9%	16%	18%
11 to 15	13%	18%	14%	16%
16 to 20	18%	17%	15%	14%
21 to 25	12%	12%	9%	11%
26 to 30	14%	13%	13%	11%
31 to 35	7%	8%	6%	5%
36 to 40	5%	4%	5%	4%
41 to 45	7%	6%	8%	6%
46 to 50	2%	2%	2%	1%
51 to 55	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
56 to 60	2%	3%	2%	2%
Over 60 minutes	1%	3%	1%	1%

2006 n = 906

Table 3.04: "If you work outside of your home, how likely are you to try new commuting solutions to reduce your transportation costs?"

	Not at all likely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Very likely	Average likelihood*
Drive in a more fuel-efficient vehicle	22%	17%	28%	34%	2.73
Take transit (buses or LRT)	48%	11%	15%	26%	2.19
Work at home or telecommute	53%	13%	12%	22%	2.03
Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	48%	21%	16%	15%	1.96
Change jobs to be closer to home	63%	16%	10%	11%	1.69
Bicycle or walk to work	68%	10%	9%	13%	1.68

2006 n varies between 879 and 890

* The average likelihood score is assigned on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = Not at all likely, 2 = Slightly likely, 3 = Moderately likely and 4 = Very likely.

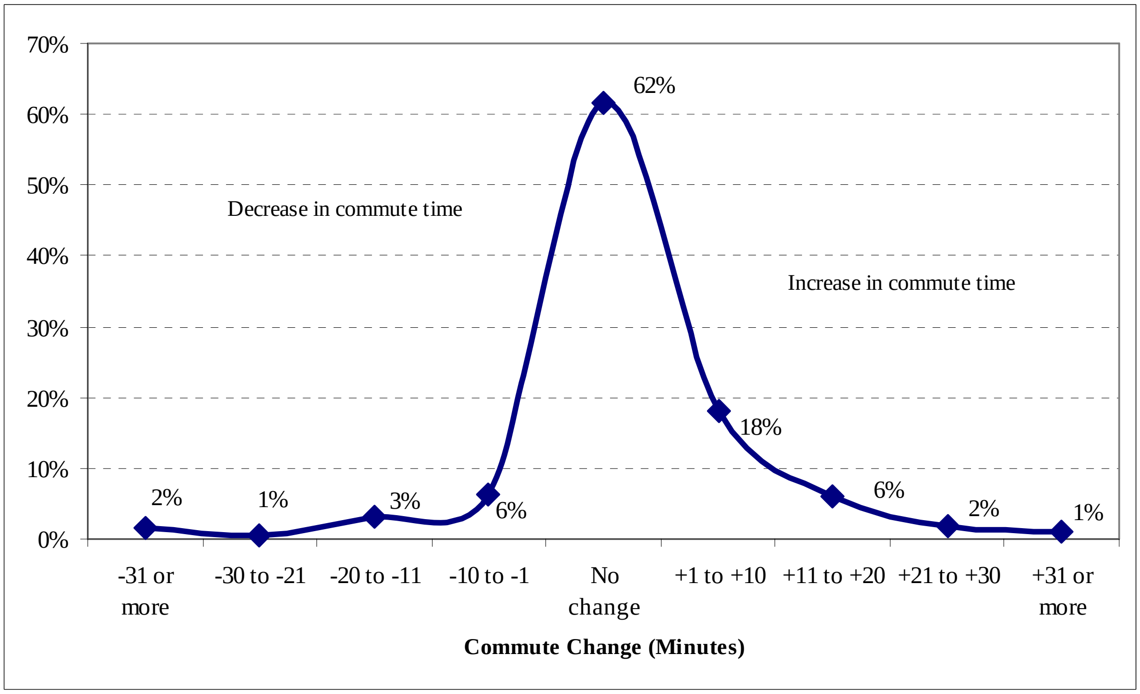
Table 3.05: "Very likely" to try new commuting solutions, by area

	Minneapolis/ Saint Paul	Developed suburbs	Developing communities	Rural areas	Metro Region
Drive in a more fuel-efficient vehicle	37%	34%	30%	39%	34%
One or more of the five traffic-reducing solutions listed below	**64%**	**45%**	**43%**	**45%**	**49%**
• Take transit (buses or LRT)	35%	27%	21%	20%	26%
• Work at home or telecommute	24%	23%	18%	24%	22%
• Drive/ride with others or car/van pool	13%	15%	14%	18%	15%
• Bicycle or walk to work	27%	9%	9%	8%	13%
• Work closer to (but not at) home	17%	12%	7%	8%	11%

2006 n varies between 879 and 890

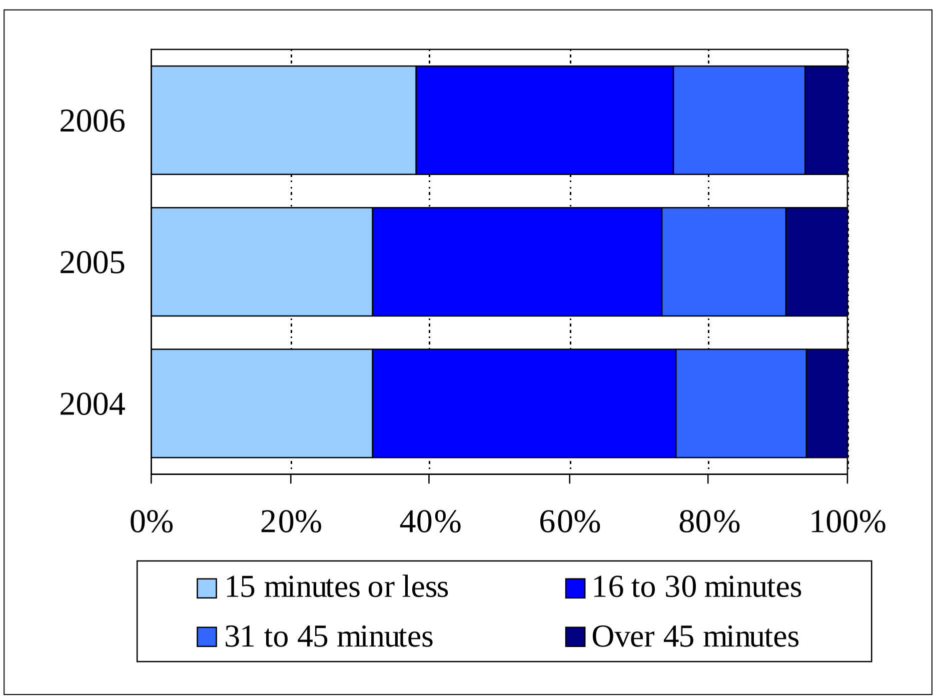
Note: Fuel-efficient vehicles were considered to be cost-reducing, but not traffic-reducing.

Figure 10: Perceived change in commute time over the past year, 2006 survey



2006 n = 885

Figure 11: Perceived commute time: 2004, 2005, and 2006 Surveys



2004 n = 581, 2005 n = 732, 2006 n = 906

Note: Data taken from 2004, 2005, and 2006 surveys' estimates of commute times at the time of survey.

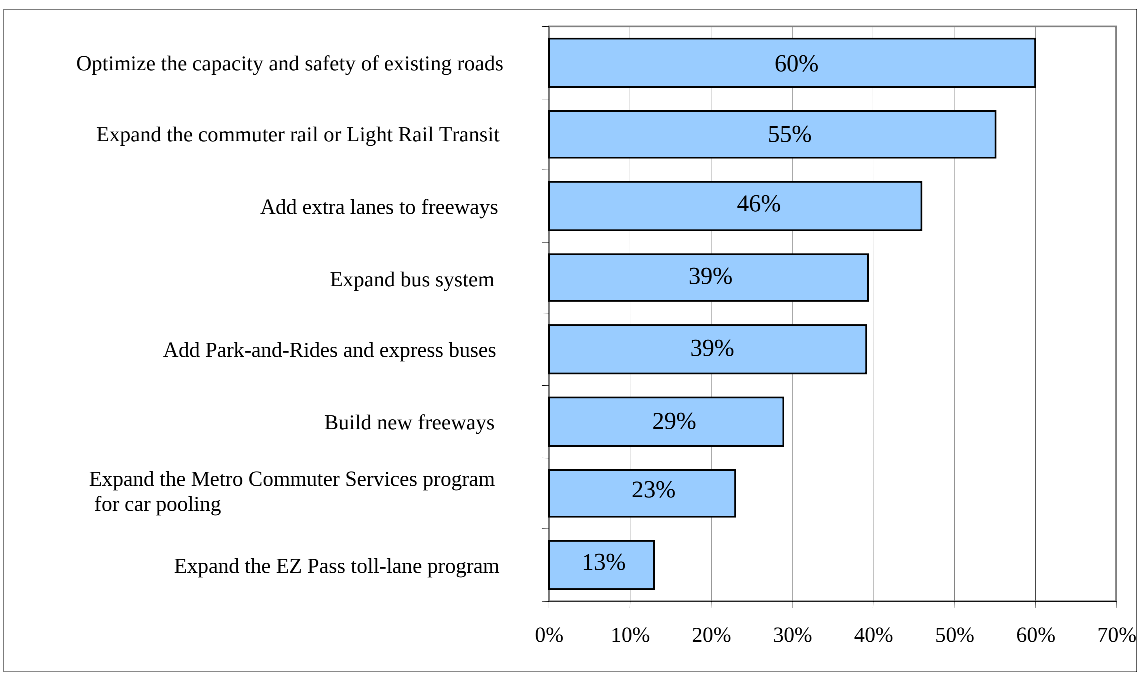
Table 3.06: "How important are these transportation programs for meeting the metro area's transportation needs?"

Component	Average Importance Score*	Not at all	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very
Optimize the capacity and safety of existing roads	3.46	2%	10%	28%	60%
Expand the commuter rail or Light Rail Transit	3.20	12%	10%	22%	55%
Add extra lanes to freeways	3.08	10%	18%	26%	46%
Add Park-and-Rides and express buses	3.07	7%	18%	36%	39%
Expand bus system	3.05	7%	20%	33%	39%
Expand the Metro Commuter Services program for car pooling	2.69	12%	29%	36%	23%
Build new freeways	2.65	18%	28%	26%	29%
Expand the EZ Pass toll-lane program	2.07	37%	32%	18%	13%

n = varies between 1,249 and 1,376

*The average importance score is assigned on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 = Not at all important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Moderately important and 4 = Very important. Those people who had no opinion were not included in this score.

Figure 12: Meeting transportation needs: Percent rating programs as "very important"



n = varies between 1,249 and 1,376

Section 4: Residential Preferences

Key Findings

- Six percent of survey respondents indicate that they live in a rural setting; 6 percent in a small town; 34 percent in a growing suburb; 30 percent in an older suburb; 18 percent in a central cities neighborhood; and 5 percent in a very urban or downtown setting.
- Twenty-seven percent of current Twin Cities residents would prefer to relocate to a different type of area.
- Of that group interested in relocating, many would prefer to live in a less urban setting.
- For residents who would prefer to relocate, the top “push factors” vary. In the growing suburbs, local area growth is the top push factor. For dissatisfied residents of older suburbs, traffic and the urban feel are the greatest concerns. For central cities residents, crime is the chief complaint.
- Hypothetically, if present-day Twin Cities residents could be redistributed to their respective preferred settings, the result would be a large exodus from the suburbs, a smaller shift out of the central cities, and a doubling of the region’s rural population.

Discussion

Type of residence

Seventy-seven percent of survey participants live in single-family, detached homes; another 15 percent live in attached housing with fewer than five units; and 5 percent live in apartments with five or more units. The growing suburbs have the highest proportion of townhomes and small apartment buildings (Table 4.01). This distribution is consistent with an observed shift in new housing construction, which may be due to “empty nesters” and seniors downsizing out of single-family, detached homes.

Survey participants were asked how well their living needs are being met by their current housing: 67 percent of residents say that their needs are very well met; only 1 percent say that their needs are not met at all (Table 4.02).

Where people currently live

The Twin Cities region includes a continuum of communities, at different stages of development, and with varying patterns of community form. As the distance from the urban core increases, community form becomes less urban and more rural. Survey participants were asked to characterize their community by choosing one of six descriptions: a very urban or downtown setting, a central city neighborhood, an older suburb, a growing suburb, a small town or a rural setting.

For this section, summary statistics and discussion draw on survey respondents’ self-identified community type. In other sections of this report, geographic sector was *assigned* based on city of residence. For example, Metropolitan Council policies consider Dayton, Minnesota, to be a “developing community.” For this section of the report, some survey cases from Dayton residents could also have been categorized as “small town,” “rural” or “growing suburb” – whichever description respondents themselves identified.

Table 4.03 shows most survey participants living in either an older suburb (30 percent) or a growing suburb (34 percent). Eighteen percent live in a central cities neighborhood and 5 percent in a very urban or downtown setting. The remainder identify as rural area (6 percent) or small town residents (6 percent).

Where people would prefer to live

Survey participants were asked whether they would like to relocate to a different kind of area. (The question is posed generally, allowing the possibility that residents could leave the Twin Cities region.) Most Twin Cities residents are satisfied with their community setting. However, 27 percent would prefer to relocate to a different type of area (Table 4.04). The share was lowest among rural area (4 percent) and small town residents (16 percent).

Table 4.05 shows where those people living in the suburbs, central cities neighborhoods, and downtown settings would prefer to live. Due to low numbers of survey respondents, data from the 2005 survey has been combined with the 2006 survey to give better statistical accuracy. Still, the relocation preferences of current rural residents are not estimated; too few were interested in moving to provide accurate statistics.

Three out of five potential relocators expressed preference for either a small town or a rural setting. The preference seems unrealistic since greater population is what transforms rural areas and small towns into something else.

Again, a 73 percent majority indicate that they do not want to relocate to a different type of area. Table 4.06 and Figure 12 take these people into account and show the overall interest in moving to new areas versus where people currently live. The results are less dramatic than looking only at those who would prefer to relocate – but the general trend of rural preference or small town preference is apparent.

Why people would prefer to move

Respondents who indicated that they would prefer relocation to a different type of area were asked what they like least about where they currently live (Table 4.07). These are the "push" factors that underlie eventual decisions to move.

Respondents were also asked what appeals most about their preferred relocation area (Table 4.08). These are the "pull" factors that draw in relocators. Both questions were open-ended, with the respondents providing push and pull factors in their own words. Individual responses were then coded, and push and pull factors categorized. Data are not available for all subgroups in Tables 4.07 and 4.08 due to the small number of respondents from (or to) some areas. For these tables, 2005 survey responses are combined with 2006 responses and central cities neighborhood and downtown residents were combined into a single segment.

Push factors

"Push factors" are community characteristics most often cited as reasons for interest in relocating. The top push factors vary across the region, although in both types of suburban areas and the central cities, residents commonly feel their areas are "too urban." On the other hand, some suburban residents feel the distance to get places is too far. Local growth rate is the top concern in the growing suburbs, and traffic the top push factor in older suburbs. For central cities residents, 37 percent cite crime and 11 percent cite noise as motivations to relocate; only 8 percent are concerned about traffic.

Pull factors

A shared “pull factor” of small towns, suburbs and central cities is that the preferred area is “close to things I like.” Among the rural areas, small towns, and suburbs, the peacefulness, cleanliness and quietness is another shared pull factor.

For those who would prefer to relocate to a rural setting, what most appeals are open space and nature and fewer people. The “small town feel” and slower pace attracts people to small towns. Meanwhile, additional appealing aspects of suburbs are the sense of community and lack of crime. For central cities, having “more things to do” and proximity to amenities are important. A number of respondents specifically mentioned the ability to walk, bike or bus places as an asset.

Table 4.01: What type of residence do you live in?

Area where they currently live:	Single-family home	Attached housing (townhome or small apartment building)	Apartment (5 or more units)	Condo or co-op	Mobile home	Other
All areas combined	77%	15%	5%	3%	1%	<1%
A rural setting	87%	6%	6%	<1%	<1%	2%
A small town	91%	7%	<1%	1%	1%	<1%
A growing suburb	72%	24%	<1%	1%	2%	<1%
An older suburb	81%	10%	4%	4%	<1%	<1%
A central cities neighborhood	75%	10%	13%	1%	<1%	<1%
A very urban or downtown setting	Sub-group data not available*					

2006 n = 1,406

* There were too few respondents in this category to accurately represent that population.

Table 4.02: Does your current residence meet your particular living needs?

Not at all	Somewhat	Mostly	Very well
1%	10%	22%	67%

2006 n = 1,409

Table 4.03: What best describes the area in which you live?
2000 to 2006

Area in which respondent lives:	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006
A rural setting	6%	9%	4%	5%	6%
A small town	9%	4%	6%	8%	6%
A growing suburb	34%	36%	34%	34%	34%
An older suburb	29%	30%	29%	25%	30%
A central cities neighborhood	16%	18%	23%	24%	18%
A very urban or downtown setting	5%	3%	4%	4%	5%

2006 n = 1,408

Table 4.04: Would you prefer to live in a different kind of area?

	No	Yes
All areas combined	73%	27%
Respondents living in:		
A rural setting	96%	4%
A small town	84%	16%
A growing suburb	65%	35%
An older suburb	76%	24%
A central cities neighborhood	76%	24%
A very urban or downtown setting	N/A*	

2006 n = 1,404
* There were too few respondents in this category to accurately represent that population.

Table 4.05: Where people live and where they would prefer to live

Area where they currently live:	n	For those who would prefer to move, where they would prefer to live (%) Rural setting	Small town	Growing suburb	Older suburb	Central cities neighborhood	Very urban or downtown setting
All areas combined	547	37%	23%	14%	9%	9%	7%
A rural setting	12	Sub-group data not available*					
A small town	43	Sub-group data not available*					
A growing suburb	222	44%	25%		10%	12%	10%
An older suburb	139	41%	21%	16%		14%	7%
A central cities neighborhood OR a very urban or downtown setting	131	21%	26%	32%	16%		

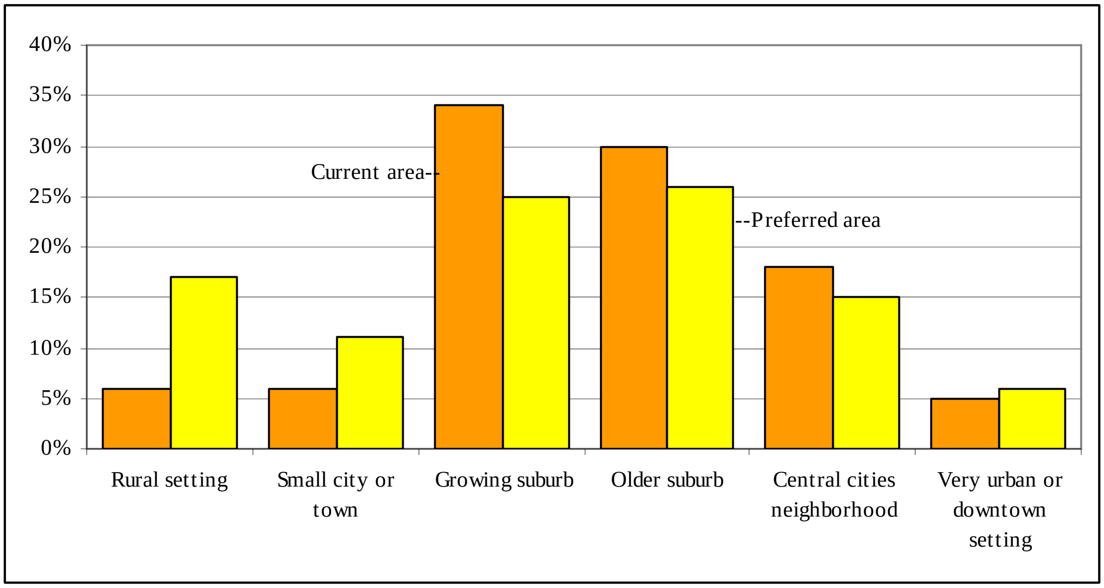
* There were too few respondents in these categories to accurately represent that population.
Responses for both 2005 and 2006 surveys were combined to allow for higher statistical significance. See methodology for further information.

Table 4.06: Where people live and where they would prefer to live, including those who want to stay where they are

	Percent of all respondents indicating: Rural setting	Small town	Growing suburb	Older suburb	Central cities neighborhood	Very urban or downtown setting
Area where they *currently* live	6%	6%	34%	30%	18%	5%
Preferred area, including those who already live there	17%	11%	25%	26%	15%	6%

n = 1,408 (current location) and n = 1,395 (preferred location)

Figure 12: The areas where people currently live and where they would prefer to live



n = 1,076 (current location) and n = 1,052 (preferred location)

Table 4.07: Push factors: What dissatisfied residents like least about where they live

What they like least	For those in this area who would prefer to leave, percent saying what they *like least*				
	Rural setting	**Small town**	**Growing suburb**	**Older suburb**	**Central cities neighborhood *or* downtown**
"n" respondents	13	43	220	136	132
Growing too fast	Sub-group data not available		**22%**	3%	<1%
Traffic			**13%**	**17%**	8%
Distance to get places is too far			**12%**	**11%**	2%
Too urban			**12%**	**14%**	**12%**
Don't like the neighbors			6%	6%	7%
Lack of space			2%	3%	1%
Crime			5%	**11%**	**37%**
Noise			1%	8%	**11%**
Area is in decline			<1%	7%	**9%**
Wrong types of development			6%	4%	<1%
Area is boring			8%	3%	<1%
Other			11%	13%	14%

Combined 2005-2006 n = 544

Notes: Responses for both 2005 and 2006 surveys were combined to allow for higher statistical significance. See methodology for further information.
Top four push factors for each area are in **bold**.

Table 4.08: Pull factors: What appeals to those who would prefer a new area

	For those who would prefer to live in this area, percent saying what *appeals most*			
Most appealing	**A rural setting**	**A small town**	**A growing suburb *or* older suburb**	**Central cities neighborhoo d *or* downtown**
"n" respondents	229	127	104	77
Fewer people	**19%**	**10%**	1%	1%
More open space/nature	**25%**	**10%**	3%	1%
Clean, peaceful, quiet	**12%**	**20%**	**11%**	**4%**
Slower pace or "small town feel"	8%	**17%**	1%	<1%
Larger lot	**9%**	2%	1%	<1%
Less congestion/traffic	7%	7%	<1%	<1%
Close to things I like, pedestrian-friendly	7%	**14%**	**24%**	**48%**
Sense of community/safety, lack of crime	4%	9%	**31%**	**6%**
More people like me	<1%	<1%	**10%**	<1%
More things to do	<1%	<1%	3%	**27%**
Mass transit	<1%	<1%	1%	3%
Types of homes I like	1%	1%	6%	1%
Other	8%	9%	8%	9%

Combined 2005-2006 n = 537
Notes: Responses for both 2005 and 2006 surveys were combined to allow for higher statistical significance.
See methodology for further information.
Top four push factors for each area are in **bold**.

Section 5: Metropolitan Council

Key Findings

- Seventy-three percent of adult residents in the metro area have heard of the Metropolitan Council.
- Ratings on the Metropolitan Council's performance in addressing and resolving regional issues are more positive than in 2000. In 2000, the good/very good ratings were at 19 percent; poor/very poor ratings were at 35 percent. In 2006, the good/very good ratings are at 42 percent and the poor/very poor ratings are down to 15 percent.
- Eight Council responsibilities and programs are thought to be very important by a majority of residents. The highest ratings went to water quality monitoring, overall planning efforts to accommodate growth, and wastewater treatment.
- Just over three-quarters of residents have visited a regional park in the last 12 months.
- Forty-four percent of residents think it is very important to purchase land now for future regional parks and park expansion.

Discussion

Knowledge of the Metropolitan Council

Seventy-three percent of adult residents in the metro area have heard of the Metropolitan Council. This is a slight rise from 2005 (69 percent), but is lower than 2004's peak of 78 percent, reached the year that the Hiawatha LRT line was completed (Table 5.01).

Rating of the Metropolitan Council

The 73 percent of participants who had heard of the Metropolitan Council were asked to rate its performance in addressing and resolving regional issues. Of that group, 42 percent think that the Council is doing a good or very good job; 43 percent think the Council is doing a fair job; and 15 percent think the Council is doing a poor or very poor job (Table 5.01 and Figure 13). The 2006 positive and negative ratings have turned around since 2000. In 2000, the good/very good ratings were at 19 percent; poor/very poor ratings were at 35 percent

Rating of importance of Council programs

While the public is divided on the Council's performance – whether the Council is doing a "good job" or just a "fair job" – there is nonetheless a consensus around the importance of the Council's portfolio of responsibilities.

Survey participants were asked about 12 Council responsibilities and programs. Program importance was rated using a four-point scale: "not at all important," "slightly important," "moderately important" and "very important." These are commonly used cognitive analysis intervals for importance, where the intervals between the choices are considered roughly equivalent. This allows the calculation of average scores to facilitate comparisons.

All 12 Council programs listed had an average score of "moderately important" or higher (Table 5.04). Eight of the 12 Council programs are thought to be "very important" by a majority of residents. The largest majorities in 2006 thought that water quality monitoring (very important to 72 percent), overall planning efforts to accommodate growth (69 percent), and wastewater treatment (66 percent) are very important programs. These three programs attracted the highest overall importance scores in previous years as well.

Light rail transit is the most controversial program, with 55 percent of residents listing it as very important and 12 percent as not important.

Regional Parks

Seventy-seven percent of residents have visited a regional park in the past 12 months (Table 5.02) – a similar share compared with recent years. Forty-four percent of residents think it is very important to purchase land now for new regional parks and park expansion (Table 5.03). Only 6 percent of residents consider purchasing land now to be “not at all important.”

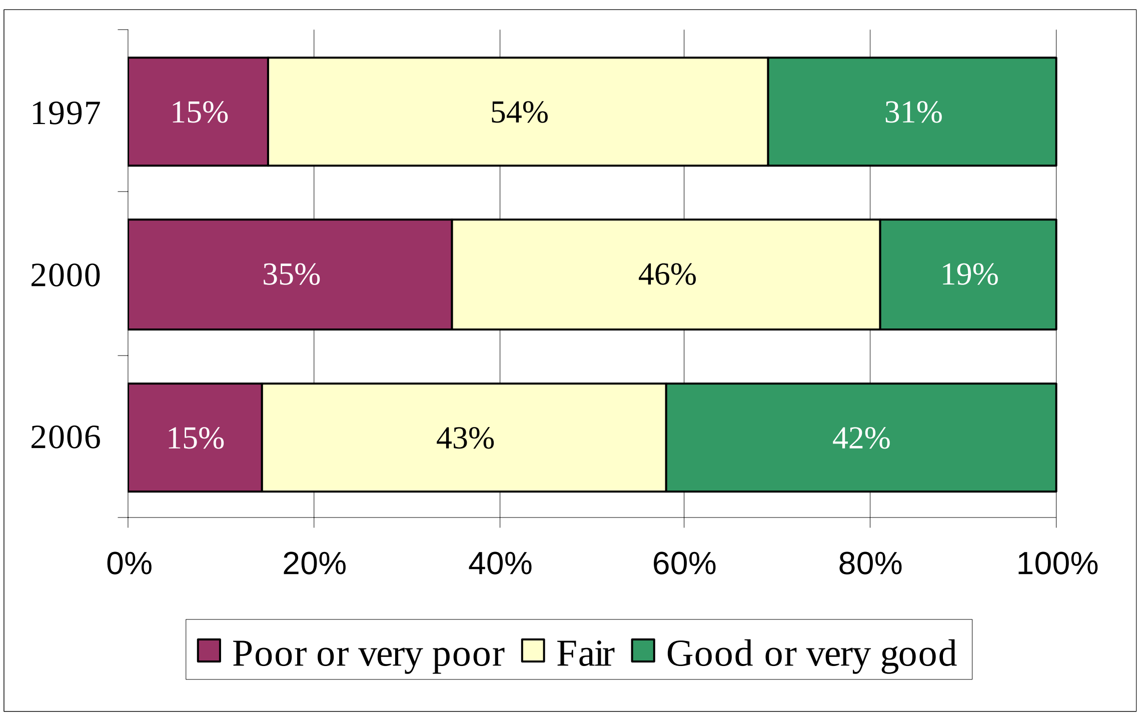
Table 5.01: Name recognition and public opinion of Metropolitan Council performance

	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006
Share of region's residents who have heard of the Metropolitan Council	**62%**	**68%**	**74%**	**78%**	**69%**	**73%**
Among those who have heard of the Metropolitan Council, "What is your impression of the job the Metropolitan Council is doing in addressing regional issues?"						
Very good job	2%	4%	2%	3%	5%	6%
Good job	17%	26%	26%	34%	32%	36%
Fair job	46%	52%	54%	43%	46%	43%
Poor job	23%	12%	14%	14%	14%	12%
Very poor job	12%	6%	4%	6%	4%	3%

Note: Beginning in 2004, respondents were explicitly invited to say "no opinion/don't know." For comparison purposes across years, the above percents include only those who expressed one of the five scalar ratings.

2006 n=1,398 respondents to name recognition question, n = 828 to follow-up question.

Figure 13: Public opinion of Metropolitan Council performance



2006 n = 828

Table 5.02: Residents who visited a regional park or trail in the last 12 months

2003	2004	2005	2006
71%	78%	74%	77%

2006 n = 1,420

Table 5.03: Importance of purchasing land for new parks

"How important is it to purchase land now for future regional parks and park expansion?"	Percent saying this is _________ important:			
	Not at all important	**Slightly important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**
Among park visitors (visited in the last 12 months)	4%	13%	35%	48%
Among non-visitors (have *not* visited in the last 12 months)	10%	28%	32%	31%
All residents of the region	6%	16%	34%	44%

2006 n = 1,390

Table 5.04: How important are the following Council programs for maintaining the quality of life in the Twin Cities metro area?

Council Program	Percent of all respondents[1] indicating a program as being ________ important				Average Score[2]
	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	
Monitoring water supply and water quality	2%	6%	20%	72%	3.64
Planning to accommodate a growing population	3%	7%	22%	69%	3.56
Wastewater treatment	2%	7%	25%	66%	3.55
Natural resources and land conservancy	2%	10%	28%	60%	3.46
Grants to clean up and reuse polluted lands	3%	13%	32%	52%	3.33
Metro Transit (bus system)	5%	12%	27%	56%	3.33
Regional parks and trails	3%	13%	34%	50%	3.31
Grants for transportation projects	4%	12%	35%	49%	3.29
Coordinating development across neighboring communities	5%	13%	38%	43%	3.20
Grants for development that connects housing, jobs and services	5%	17%	33%	45%	3.19
Light Rail Transit	12%	13%	20%	55%	3.18
Grants to develop and preserve housing for all income groups	7%	22%	35%	36%	3.00

n varied between 1,323 and 1,383 for the various programs.
[1] All survey participants were asked this question, even if they had not previously heard of the Metropolitan Council.
[2] The average score is based on the four-point scale, with 1 = Not at all important; 2 = Slightly important; 3 = Moderately important; and 4 = Very important. Respondents who had no opinion or "don't know" were not included in calculating the average score.

Section 6: Demographics

Discussion

The information presented in this section was used primarily for internal purposes, such as checking for potential non-response bias and determining weights for data analysis. Both weighted results and unweighted response counts are listed. (See Section 7 for details of weighting and survey methodology).

Table 6.01: County of residence

County	2006 Weighted Percent	2006 Unweighted Percent
Anoka	11	13
Carver	4	8
Dakota	13	10
Hennepin	42	36
Ramsey	18	17
Scott	5	7
Washington	7	9

2006 n = 1,422

Table 6.02: Age of participant

Age Category	2006 Weighted Percent	2006 Unweighted Percent
18 to 29	18	5
30 to 39	21	15
40 to 49	24	25
50 to 64	24	33
65 +	13	23

2006 n = 1,377 (excludes blank responses)

Table 6.03: Gender of participant

Gender	2006 Weighted Percent	2006 Unweighted Percent
Male	50	54
Female	50	46

2006 n = 1,405 (excludes blank responses)

Table 6.04: Which best describes your race/ethnicity?

Race/Ethnicity	2006 Weighted Percent	2006 Unweighted Percent
White/Caucasian	83	94
Asian/Asian-American	8	2
Hispanic/Latino	2	1
Black/African-American	6	2
American Indian	<1	<1
Other or Multi-Racial	1	<1

2006 n = 1,380 (excludes blank responses)

Table 6.05: How many household members?

Household members	2006 Weighted Percent	2006 Unweighted Percent
Live alone	15	22
2 in household	31	37
3 in household	19	14
4 in household	20	17
5 or more in household	15	11

2006 n = 1,387 (excludes blank responses)

Table 6.06: What was your total household income before taxes, in 2005?

Household income	2006 Weighted Percent	2006 Unweighted Percent
Less than $25,000	8	9
$25,000 to $49,999	21	23
$50,000 to $74,999	23	24
$75,000 to $99,999	18	19
$100,000 to $150,000	21	18
Over $150,000	9	8

2006 n = 1,247 (excludes blank responses)

Section 7: Methodology

In 2006, 3,300 residents of the seven-county Twin Cities area were randomly selected, contacted by mail, and invited to participate in this study. The sample was stratified to provide equal numbers of addressees in four geographic sectors. The four sectors included: ZIP codes categorized as central cities, as developed suburbs, as developing communities, and as rural areas. Because ZIP codes may include multiple cities and towns, geographic area of respondents was reassigned on receipt of completed surveys.

Before the initial survey packet was mailed, each sampled resident was sent a postcard alerting him or her to the coming survey. One week later (October 5, 6 and 9), each sampled resident was sent the survey packet: a letter from the Council Chairman explaining the study, a survey questionnaire to be completed, and a postage-paid return envelope.

To encourage participation by recent immigrant groups, the survey questionnaire included instructions in Spanish and Hmong languages. The instructions explained the survey and offered the reader the opportunity to arrange an interview in another language.

Data collection began October 9. Throughout the process, received responses and returned mail were tracked by Metropolitan Council and the Council's survey contractor, Information Specialists Group. One week after the October survey packet was mailed, non-respondents were flagged for telephone follow-up. In their calls, Information Specialists Group encouraged non-respondents to participate through telephone interviews, conducted thru November 14. Mail-returned survey questionnaires were accepted for inclusion through November 29, 2006.

Of the initial 3,300 sampled residents, 475 were determined to be unlocatable or deceased; 24 participants were reached, but found living outside the seven-county area. This left 2,801 active records in the survey sample database.

In total, 587 telephone interviews and 835 mail-based surveys were completed and validated as complete responses. The 1,422 completions represent a 51 percent response rate for the study.

Both the sample size and the response rate are relevant to the reliability of survey analysis findings. With a respondent pool of 1,422, the margin of error (due to sufficiency of sample size) is +/-3 percent, with 95 percent confidence. Margins of error increase for those questions that were answered by a smaller number of respondents. (Table 7.01)

The response rate, 51 percent, is considered good. Council staff are concerned, however, that the survey may under-represent certain demographic segments. This concern is addressed in this study through weighting of response data.

Weighting of the data was necessary to correct for geographic stratification in sample design, as well as demographic imbalances in the respondent pool. Individual survey responses are given greater (or lesser) weight in order to fully represent geographic and demographic population segments. The unadjusted pool of survey responses *under-*

represents people under 30 and minority-identified residents. The raw, unadjusted pool *over*-represented rural residents, senior citizens, and people living alone. (The over-representation of rural residents was by design; rural areas were over-sampled.)

Weight factors were independently calculated for age, gender, minority or majority race, household size, and geographic sector. For most of these variables, the distribution of survey participants was benchmarked against 2005 American Community Survey statistics for adults in the Twin Cities region. For geographic sector, the distribution was benchmarked against Metropolitan Council's own 2005 population estimates for cities and towns. The five factors were then multiplied together (age weight X gender weight X minority weight X household size weight X geographic weight) to yield "case weights" for each of the 1,422 survey responses.

The end product is a survey dataset that better reflects the region's geographic and demographic diversity: Survey participants from each age cohort fairly represent their share of the region's population; minority participants and white, non-Hispanic segments fairly represent their share of the population.

The survey instrument is found in the Appendix section of this report.

Sensitivity of results

Response to any public opinion survey is influenced by survey design and wording of questions, as well as survey participants' feelings about the survey and survey sponsor.

For several years, the University of Minnesota Center for Survey Research (MCSR) has conducted a regional poll asking "What do you think is the single most important problem facing people in the Twin Cities metropolitan area today?" This is almost identical to the Metropolitan Council's survey question. However, the MCSR and Council receive very different response distributions – and arrive at different findings. In the Winter 2006 MCSR survey, respondents' concerns were split almost equally: transportation, economy, social issues and healthcare were each identified by one-sixth of the sample. In the 2006 Council survey, transportation and crime captured a two-thirds majority; social issues, healthcare, and economic issues were lesser concerns.

The conclusion is that survey respondents are influenced by survey design, including other questions asked in each survey, and/or by participants' tailoring of response to the perceived audience. When other questions provide a "framing," influence is possible

Table 7.01: Margin of error for various sample sizes

Sample of "n"	Margin of error, with 95% confidence
1,070	+/- 3%
600	+/- 4%
380	+/- 5%
270	+/- 6%
200	+/- 7%
150	+/- 8%
120	+/- 9%
100	+/- 10%

Table 7.02: Distribution of survey sample and regional population

	Unadjusted distribution of survey participants	**Demographic distribution of region's adult population**	**Weighted, valid distribution of survey data, *excluding blank responses***
White only	92%	83%	83%
Minority or multi-racial	5%	17%	17%
No race identified	3%		
Male	54%	49%	50%
Female	45%	51%	50%
No gender identified	1%		
Senior citizens (65+)	22%	13%	13%
Old boomers (50-64)	32%	23%	24%
Young boomers (40-49)	24%	23%	24%
Gen X (30-39)	15%	21%	21%
Gen Y (18-29)	5%	21%	18%
No age identified	3%		
Live alone	22%	15%	15%
2 in household	36%	31%	31%
3 in household	14%	19%	19%
4 in household	16%	20%	20%
5 or more in household	10%	15%	15%
No household information	2%		
Central cities	25%	24%*	24%
Developed suburbs	27%	36%*	36%
Developing	25%	34%*	34%
Rural	23%	6%*	6%

* For Council policy area, the all-ages population distribution is used as the benchmark. For race, age, gender, and household size, the adult population is used as the benchmark.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire is an eight-page document with 29 questions. View questionnaire (15Mb).